Department of State

# TELEGRAM

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NAVY JAG-CAPTAIN MARSH (SUBS) NEA-MR. SISCO P/ON-MR BARTCH (INFO)
NEA/IAI-MR. ATHERTON

003987

P 131326Z MAY 68
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

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REFERENCE: TEL AVIV 1709 (MAY 14, 1968), DEPT 169872 (MAY 23, 1968) TEL AVIV 3878 (MAY 27, 1968)

SUBJECT: USS LIBERTY CLAIMS

1. PAYMENT RECEIVED. AT ITS DISCRETION EMBASSY MAY INFORM GOI.

2. DEPT APPRECIATES GOI COMMENTS ON PROPOSED PRESS STATEMENT (FIRST REFTEL) WHICH, WITH ONE EXCEPTION, WE HAVE INCORPORATED IN TEXT, WHICH WE RELEASING TODAY, MAY 13. REFERENCE TO GT TRAGIC ERROR UNGT IN FIRST PARA, WHICH DID NOT APPEAR IN OUR RELEASE ON DEATH CLAIMS, COULD PROMPT PRESS QUERIES AND REOPEN PUBLIC DEBATE ON RESPONSIBILITY FOR LIBERTY INCIDENT. WE PREFER FACTUAL, LOW-KEY STATEMENT. WE HAVE, HOWEVER, DELETED REFERENCE TO ISRAELI NAVAL AND AIR UNITS FROM ORIGINAL TEXT AND MERELY REFERRED TO ATTACK. THIS CORRESPONDS TO LANGUAGE IN DEPT PRESS STATEMENT MAY 1968, AT TIME DEATH CLAIM PAYMENT ANNOUNCED, WHICH SHOWN TO GOI PRIOR TO ISSUANCE (SECOND AND THIRD REFTEL).

3. IN ACCORDANCE PARA 5 REFTEL DEPT WILL LIMIT COMMENTS ON SHIP CLAIM TO EACH THAT CLAIM UNDER DISCUSSION AND DEPT ACCORDINGLY

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REVIEWED BY Lyn Kelly DATE 4/10/03

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